



Montana Crime Reporting Newsletter

MBCC TECHNICAL
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Montana Board of Crime Control Request For Proposals

The MBCC currently has three RFP's open in which law enforcement agencies would be eligible to apply.

MBCC is soliciting proposals for "youth-oriented substance abuse and violence prevention programs" funded by the Federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act. It is estimated that \$276,130 will be available under this RFP. The application deadline is January 5, 2009.

MBCC is soliciting proposals for programs under the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws program. It is anticipated that \$332,500 will be awarded under this RFP. The application deadline is January 5, 2009.

More information about all of these RFP's and past RFP's is available on MBCC's website: www.bcc.mt.gov.

Quality Assurance Review

Beginning in 2009, MBCC's Technical Services Unit will begin piloting an MTIBRS Quality Assurance Review (QAR). It is a federal requirement that Montana's NIBRS program have a QAR program in place in order for us to keep our NIBRS certification. The QAR will be conducted on MTIBR reporting law enforcement agencies. Only a few agencies will undergo the QAR this first year. More agencies will be reviewed in the coming years.

MTIBR Standards

The Montana Incident-Based Reporting Standards Handbook is available at:

www.mbcc.mt.gov/Data/CrimeDataSubmissions/CrDataSub.asp.

It is based on the FBI standards and provides the **guidelines** of reporting accurate crime data.

Credit Card/Automatic Teller Machine Fraud

When reporting a credit card/automatic machine fraud, the property description should be the actual property that was purchased using the stolen credit/debit card. In a significant number of incidents, the credit card has been entered in as the property description.

Destruction, Damage, Vandalism of Property

Whenever a destruction, damage, vandalism of property occurs and the offender damaged vehicle parts or accessories that are on the vehicle, such as scratched doors, smashed tail light, etc., the more appropriate property description is the actual automobile according to FBI guidelines. In over 1,000 incidents from January to September 2008, the property description entered was the vehicle part or accessory damaged.

Negligent & Criminal Endangerment

When reporting a negligent endangerment (0827) or criminal endangerment (0421) an individual victim is required. These offenses are classified as a simple and aggravated assault. They are a crime against persons. If an individual victim is not easily identified, please use your best judgment in determining a victim. For example, an intoxicated individual is driving at an excessive speed down the street endangering passersby. If one of those passersby is not readily available to get their information,

the victim could be the law enforcement officer responding to the incident. This officer needs to be entered as an I, individual victim. In the same example if there were passengers in the car, they could be entered as the victim. Another example, when responding to a bomb threat at a school, all students do not need to be entered as victims, just the most involved person i.e. principal, teacher.

What Property Description is used for an I Pod?

77- Other
51- Musical instrument
27- Recordings (audio/visual)
26- Radios/TVs/VCRs
Answer is on the last page.

Unknown Victim Information

Our FBI Jan.- Sept. 2008 Data Integrity Report showed 4,180 incidents that contain unknown information about an individual victim. Generally, this information should be known. If an exact age cannot be determined, an age range may be entered to approximate the victim's age. The age, sex, and race of victims provides important statistical information and every effort should be made to collect this data.

MTIBR Tips of the Month

These training tools can be found at:

www.mbcc.mt.gov/Data/publications/Newsletter_Tip/Newsletter_Tips.asp

Your data is important to the MBCC and the state of Montana. It is used to guide policy development at a state and local level. Additionally, the Federal Department of Justice places an emphasis on crime reporting as a criteria for distributing federal funds.

Economics and Crime

Will the Economic Downturn Lead to An Increase in Crime? There doesn't seem to be a clear consensus to the question. The current economic crisis is only fueling the debate. Academia has not been able to find a clear link between the state of the economy and crime rates. In that same vane, law enforcement practitioners are seeing mixed signals in there respective communities. The argument is that as the economy contracts, people start loosing their jobs, wages decrease, and more people end out on the street. More people out on the street with little legitimate means of making money will turn towards illegal means of generating money. In theory, theft, robbery, and perhaps burglary would increase. Drug crimes would also rise as more people turn towards the drug trade. This theory may, or may not hold any water. The most stark example of low crime rates and high unemployment occurred during the great depression. Fast forward into the 1950s and 1960s where the national economy grew and national crime rates increased. Compare the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s to the 1970s when the economy was shrinking and then this argument becomes a little bit more complex. Crime rates increased in the 1970s as the economy contracted. Between 1955 to 1972, crime rates increased over 140% according to Eli Lehrer (2000) of the Heritage Foundation. Overall national crime rates tended to increase through the 1970s and 1980s. Then the 1990s saw a booming economy and crimes rates decreased.

The current economic downturn varies from those previous to it, in its origins and breadth of industries affected. Some would argue that the beginning of the current recession can be traced back to the record number of foreclosures beginning as late as 2005. According to Wilson and Paulsen (2008) the current foreclosure crisis is expediting the normally slow process of neighborhood decline. Wilson and Paulsen assert that decaying neighborhoods result in theft, drug crime, vandalism , vagrancy, prostitution and arson. Additionally, residents of ravaged neighborhoods may be more likely to fall victim to burglary and robbery. In sum, Wilson and Paulsen assert that the immense increase in foreclosures in certain communities fundamentally changes the urban fabric of a community and those communities become socially disorganized.

One example of what the foreclosure crisis has done to a community and how police have responded is the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD). The CMPD combined foreclosure data from 2003—2007 with crime data to identify at risk neighborhoods. The CMPD noticed that between 2003 and 2007, violent crime rates in high foreclosure areas tended to increase, while violent crime in low foreclosure areas tended to remain relatively low.

According to Christine Hauser and Al Baker of the New York Times, the New York City police commissioner has not noticed the same foreclosure affect on crime in his jurisdictions. Additionally, Hauser and Baker state that the Los Angeles Police Chief has also not experienced a sudden increase in crime do to the ailing economy. However, the ultimate affect that the slumping economy will have on law enforcement, and ultimately crime, will be manifested in local and state law enforcement budgets.

Continued...

If the economy does or does not have a direct effect on crime, it seems a slumping economy could have a secondary influence on factors that lead to criminality. The 1990s saw a rapid decrease in violent and property crimes throughout the nation, roughly a 30% decrease in both. One popular explanation for the decrease is the booming economy of the decade.

According to Levitt (2004) four factors ultimately led to the rapid decrease in crime in the 1990s. His theory dismisses the economy as a major factor. However, Levitt does note that a decrease in state and local budget could indirectly affect crime rates by reducing spending on police and prisons. Levitt identifies the number of police, a rising prison population, the waning crack epidemic, and the legalization of abortion as factors that explain all of the observed decline in crime during the 1990s.

It remains to be seen how the current economic crisis will affect crime in Montana and the nation. Perhaps the economy has no direct cause on crime rates. History does not paint a clear picture. On the other hand, maybe other looming threats to society will rear up and contribute to increases in crime regardless of what the economy does, much like the effect that methamphetamine has had on some small communities in this decade and crack cocaine had on inner city neighborhoods in the 1980s.

Sources:

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What Property Description is used for an I Pod?

26—Radios/TVs/VCRs